

and such lands to rent or lease ; also to take and receive any money, goods or chattels, given, sold or bequeathed to them, and to apply the same to the use of their churches as effectually as the same could have been applied by the vestry of the Protestant Episcopal Church to their respective parishes ; provided the clear yearly value of the estate, (exclusive of the rents of pews, &c.) does not exceed that allowed to any vestry.

SEC. 9. *And be it enacted*, That the limitations in point of annual value aforesaid shall not be understood to affect the estate, property, interest or inheritance, or the income arising therefrom, which any christian church, congregation or society, may be in possession of at the time of passing this act.

Limitations of annual value not to affect the estate of any church.

By 1814, ch. 58, the Baltimore conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church to have all the benefits arising from all gifts or grants of property, &c.

SEC. 10. *And*, whereas it necessary for the greater effect of the preaching of the Gospel, that men should be permitted to employ and sit under the teaching of those whom they find or esteem most capable of instructing them, and enforcing the precepts of religious truth, in whose character and faithfulness they have most confidence ; therefore, *Be it enacted*, that where any number of persons belonging to any church or congregation sufficient to build a church or house of worship, and to maintain a minister, shall choose to separate from the church or congregation of which they have hitherto been a part, and to erect a house of worship, and employ a minister for themselves, it shall be lawful for them so to do, and they shall, by their respective name or style, be entitled to all the benefits of this act as aforesaid, any thing in the act for the establishment of vestries for each parish in this state to the contrary notwithstanding, provided only, that all arrears, debts and engagements, contracted, due, or becoming due, while members of the former society, shall be punctually and faithfully discharged.

Persons may separate from a church, erect a house of worship, and employ a minister.

SEC. 11. *And be it enacted*, That so much of the act* for the establishment of vestries for each parish in this state as confers the powers of civil officers of the peace upon churchwardens, be and the same are hereby declared null and void.

*Part of an act declared void. * 1798, ch. 24.*

SEC. 12. *And be it enacted*, That this act shall not repeal any part of the act for the establishment of vestries for each parish in this state, except so far as the same is inconsistent with the tenth and eleventh sections of this act.

Not to repeal a former act, &c.

SEC. 13. *And be it enacted*, That nothing herein contained shall be construed, adjudged or taken, to abridge or affect the rights of conscience or private judgment, or in the least to alter or change the religious constitution or government of any church, congregation or society, so far as respects, or in any wise concerns, doctrine, discipline or worship.

Nor to affect the rights of conscience.